

APPENDIX G

Public Comments Received



October 18, 2006

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Red Wolf Recovery Program
Attn: Draft Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Veterinary Center
on Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 1969
Manteo, NC 27954

Subject: Comments regarding the Draft Environmental Assessment for the
Proposed Veterinary Center on Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of Defenders of Wildlife (Defenders) and our more than 800,000 members and activists, including nearly 16,000 in North Carolina, we thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service' Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Proposed Veterinary Center (Center) on Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

Defenders is dedicated to protecting and restoring all native wild animals and plants in their natural communities. Our organization has worked on red wolf recovery since the mid-1980s through a combination of advocacy and public education. We are also a long-time supporter of the national wildlife refuge system and consistently advocate for sound policies and increased funding for this important system of lands.

We commend the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Red Wolf Recovery Program, which has enabled the red wolf population to increase from extirpation before 1980 to approximately 100 individuals living in the wild throughout northeastern North Carolina today.

Comments on Alternative 2 – Preferred Alternative:

Defenders fully supports the implementation of the proposed Alternative 2, which proposes the construction of the Center on a three acre parcel of land, owned by Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, on the east side of Highway 94, approximately 1.3 miles south of US 64 and the town of Columbia, in Tyrrell County, North Carolina.

The construction of the Center is imperative to the recovery of the red wolf because it will help to address health and safety violations and alleviate physical security concerns occurring at the current facility used by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Its location within red wolf habitat will

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also increase efficiency in addressing medical concerns for the red wolf population, preventing additional stress on the animals in need of care.

Further, the ten factors used by FWS to determine the impacts of this proposal show that the construction proposed in Alternative 2 will have minimal effects on the existing environment. In addition, the inclusion of the red wolf escape contingency plan in this draft EA addresses public concerns regarding the construction of this facility. As developments continue, we encourage FWS to continue communication with the local community to prevent any misinformation about the effects and operations of the proposed facility from occurring.

Comments regarding Alternative 1 & 3:

Alternatives 1 & 3 are not acceptable because the recovery program needs this facility to be constructed immediately. The current facilities have been cited as inadequate; therefore, the construction of this facility is crucial to provide the proper care for endangered red wolves as well as to further the goals of the red wolf recovery program.

Defenders of Wildlife appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft EA. We encourage the Service to proceed with Alternative 2 – Preferred Alternative, which will help ensure the long-term recovery of America's only wild red wolf population.

Sincerely,

/signed/

Gina Schrader
Conservation Associate

Red Wolf Coalition

October 24, 2006

Red Wolf Coalition
P. O. Box 96
Columbia, NC 27925

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Red Wolf Recovery Program
Attn: Draft Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Veterinary Facility
Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 1969
Manteo, NC 27954

Re: Comments on Draft Environmental Assessment for Proposed Veterinary Facility located on Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

The Red Wolf Coalition (RWC) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed Veterinary Facility (Facility) on the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (PLNWR).

The RWC advocates for the long-term survival of red wolf populations by teaching about red wolves and by fostering public involvement in red wolf conservation. We support the work of the USFWS Red Wolf Recovery Program, and we applaud the work of the Red Wolf Recovery Team whose expertise and dedication have enabled endangered red wolves to gain a foothold in the five-county recovery area in northeastern North Carolina.

Alternative 2 – Comments

The RWC supports Alternative 2. This Alternative proposes the construction of the Veterinary Facility on a parcel of land (3 acres) on the east side of HWY 94, approximately 1.3 miles south of US Hwy 64. This parcel of land is owned by the PLNWR.

The RWC considers the construction of this Veterinary Facility vital to the ongoing recovery efforts of the red wolf (*Canis rufus*). The Facility is critically needed by the Red Wolf Recovery Team to provide medical care for red wolves and to aid in the collection of research data. Additionally, the Veterinary Facility will address the safety violations cited at the current facility and the security concerns there as well.

USFWS used 10 factors to determine the impacts of the construction proposed in Alternative 2. The construction will have minimal environmental impact. The red wolf escape contingency plan in the EA draft takes into consideration any aspect of public concern about the Facility. The Coalition will take all necessary steps to inform the public about this Facility and to communicate to local citizens the advantages of having the construction go forward.

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Because the current facility is inadequate and in violation of safety standards, it is critical that construction begin as soon as possible. Therefore, Alternatives 1 and 3 are unacceptable.

The Red Wolf Coalition encourages the USFWS to go forward with Alternative 2 – Preferred Alternative. The proposed Veterinary Facility will enable the Red Wolf Recovery Team to provide excellent care for the red wolf population which will, in turn, help to ensure the long-term survival of this critically endangered animal.

Respectfully,

/signed/

Cornelia N. Hutt
Red Wolf Coalition
Chair, Board of Directors